ST WILFRID’S CE PARISH CHURCH, RIBCHESTER
Lancashire

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Visual Inspection

Oxford Archaeology North
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SUMMARY

IWA Architects have been required by English Heritage to conduct an archaeological building investigation of St Wilfrid’s Parish Church, Ribchester, Lancashire, (NGR SD 69964 35038) prior to extensive renovations being carried out at the site. The works comprised a desk-based assessment complemented by a visual inspection of the church. Following submission of a project design, OA North was commissioned to undertake the work, which was carried out in July 2004.

The desk-based assessment determined that the present church is built in the southwest corner of the site of the Roman fort of Bremetennacum, from which Ribchester ultimately derives its name; being a contraction of “Ribble castra” meaning Roman camp on the Ribble. There is no secure evidence for a Christian presence at the fort during the Roman period, but Celtic Christian missionaries are thought to have preached in this part of Lancashire in the seventh century AD. In addition, fragments of Anglian crosses have been found within the churchyard. It has, therefore, been conjectured that an Anglian church was established on the site prior to the present church. The first historic record of a church is in AD1200, a date which corresponds with the core architecture of the Nave and Chancel. The church was subsequently expanded in the forthcoming centuries with the addition of the West Tower, a porch, two chantrys and finally a Vestry added in 1881. It is presently a Grade I listed building.

The visual inspection was able to identify many of the major phases of alteration and rebuilding that have taken place at St Wilfrid’s Church. The age of the structure and the number of known periods of refurbishment inhibited identification of every phase. The visual inspection and the results of the desk-based assessment were able to highlight the significance of the building and the potential for mitigation work during the present programme of repair to reveal important information regarding the structure.

A programme of archaeological monitoring in the form of a permanent presence watching brief has been specified in the project design and recommendations for specific areas to be observed are made. It is further recommended that a more detailed record of the roof be made prior to the renovations being carried out and that any areas where wall coverings are removed be examined in order to identify re-used masonry.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North would like to express its thanks to IWA Architects and the Parish Church Council of St Wilfrid’s and St Saviours for commissioning the work. Further thanks are due to Patrick Tostevin, Curator, Ribchester Museum, Peter Iles, Lancashire County Archaeologist, and the staff of the County Record Offices in Preston for their assistance.

The desk-based assessment was carried out by David Tonks and the visual inspection was undertaken by Daniel Elsworth. The report was written by David Tonks and Daniel Elsworth. The drawings were produced by Mark Tidmarsh. The report was edited by Alison Plummer, who also managed the project, and Emily Mercer and Alan Lupton.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

1.1.1 IWA Architects have been required by English Heritage to conduct an archaeological building investigation of St Wilfrid’s Parish Church, Ribchester, Lancashire (NGR SD 69964 35038; Fig 1), prior to extensive renovations being carried out at the site. In response to this, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was requested to submit a project design for the required work, in the form of a desk-based assessment and visual inspection (Appendix 2). OA North was commissioned to undertake the work, which was carried out in July 2004.

1.2 OBJECTIVE

1.2.1 This document sets out the results of the desk-based assessment and visual inspection in the form of a short report. It outlines the historical findings and observations made during the programme of work, followed by an assessment of the impact of the proposed development.
2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with both the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

2.2.1 Introduction: the desk-based assessment comprised a search of both published and unpublished records held by the Lancashire Sites and Monuments Record office (SMR) in Preston, the Lancashire County Record Office in Preston (CRO(P)), and the archives and library held at OA North.

2.2.2 Sites and Monuments Record (SMR): information relating specifically to the church was obtained from the Lancashire Sites and Monuments Record. This is a database of archaeological sites within the county and maintained by Lancashire County Council in Preston.

2.2.3 Lancashire County Record Office (Preston) (LCRO(Preston)): the County Record Office in Preston was visited to consult parish records relating to the church. Several other primary sources (maps) and secondary sources were investigated.

2.2.4 Oxford Archaeology North: OA North has an extensive archive of secondary sources relevant to the study area, including numerous unpublished client reports on work carried out in the area both as OA North and under its former guise as the Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU).

2.3 VISUAL INSPECTION

2.3.1 The visual inspection comprised a rapid examination of the standing fabric of the building intended to identify broad phases of alteration and use and place the results of the desk-based assessment into a physical context. Written records were kept during the visual inspection using OA North *pro forma* record sheets, and sketches and plans were produced where necessary. Photographs of both the building in general and specific features were also taken.

2.4 ARCHIVE

2.4.1 A full archive has been prepared to a professional standard in accordance with current United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC 1990) and English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The paper and digital archive will be deposited with LRO(P) on completion of the project. Copies of the report will also be deposited with the Lancashire SMR in Preston.
3. DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT RESULTS

3.1 THE SETTING

3.1.1 Topography: the Millstone Grit outcrop of Pendle Hill forms part of the northern boundary to the area (Countryside Commission 1998). When combined with the fells of the south Pennines, this higher ground surrounds the site and serves as an important backdrop that dwarfs the scale of the settlement in the valley bottom (ibid). Stydd and Ribchester are also bordered to the west by Longridge Fell. Although the industrialized towns of Burnley, Accrington and Blackburn dominate much of the Lancashire Valleys, Stydd lies to the western edge of the area and is surrounded by agricultural land. The field boundaries are hedgerows that give way to stone walls and fencing on higher ground (ibid). Woodland is restricted to small woods and there are several areas of parkland within the Lancashire Valleys connected to large houses (ibid).

3.1.2 Topography: the Millstone Grit outcrop of Pendle Hill forms part of the northern boundary to the area (ibid). When combined with the fells of the south Pennines, this creates enclosure and serves as an important backdrop which dwarfs the scale of the settlement in the valley bottom (ibid). Ribchester is also bordered to the west by Longridge Fell. Although much of the Lancashire Valleys are dominated by the industrialised towns of Burnley, Accrington and Blackburn (ibid), Ribchester lies to the western edge of the area and is surrounded by agricultural land. The field boundaries are hedgerows which give way to stone walls and fencing on higher ground (ibid). Woodland is restricted to small woods and there are several areas of parkland within Lancashire Valleys connected to large houses (ibid).

3.1.3 Geology: the underlying solid geology around Ribchester is dominated by Sabden shales of the Millstone Grit Group masked by thick boulder clay deposits (Aitkenhead et al 1992). The drift geology is also characterised by typical brown alluvial soils of the Alun association (Ordnance Survey 1983).

3.2 BACKGROUND ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

3.2.1 Introduction: the present church is built on the site of the Roman fort of Bremetennacum (J2 RIB/STW n.d.; Plate 8), from which Ribchester ultimately derives its name, being a contraction of ‘Ribble castra’ meaning ‘Roman camp on the Ribble’ (ibid). There is not any secure evidence for a Christian presence during the Roman period, but Celtic Christian missionaries are thought to have preached in this part of Lancashire in the seventh century AD (ibid). In addition, fragments of early-medieval crosses have been found within the churchyard (ibid). It may, therefore, be conjectured that a Celtic church was established on the site although, if it had been, it would perhaps not have survived the incursions of pagan Vikings (ibid). Consequently, the first record of a church is in AD 1200, a date which corresponds with the core architecture of the nave and chancel. The church was subsequently expanded in the
forthcoming centuries with the addition of the West Tower, a porch, two chantrys and, finally, a Vestry added in 1881. It is presently a Grade I listed building.

3.2.1 **Roman Period:** the early history of the church of St Wilfrid, Ribchester, is undoubtedly closely connected to its location; within the Roman fort of Bremetennacum. Although Christianity was adopted by Roman Emperor Constantine I (the Great) in AD 312 (Pohlsander 2004; Shotter 1993, 73), it is not known when the first Christian presence arrived at Ribchester. Even after 312 AD it took some time for people to renounced their pagan beliefs although there must have been increasing numbers of converts throughout the country at this time (Shotter 1993, 73). There are a number of pieces of evidence for the spread of Christianity into the north-west, from as early as the mid-second century, and it is considered likely that any pre-conquest church sites might betray the existence of an earlier Christian site (op cit, 73-4). The only thing at Ribchester to imply the existence of the Christian faith at the fort is a Roman oil lamp bearing the *chi-rho* monogram (Finch n.d., 3). Its provenance is, however, highly insecure and it is thought by the present Curator of Ribchester Museum that it is not even from Ribchester. More probably it is a relatively modern import of North African origin (Patrick Tostevin pers comm). There is, therefore, no clear evidence for the existence of either Christianity or a church on the site as early as the Roman period.

3.2.2 Excavations across the area of the Roman fort have revealed that the church is situated close to its centre and near to the granaries and *Principia* (Edwards 2000, Fig 20). Whether the arrangement of the buildings in the fort had any bearing on the positioning of the church is not clear, although its central position within the area of the fort is noticeable.

3.2.3 **Early Medieval Period:** the evidence for the presence of a church on the site in the centuries following the withdrawal of Roman administration of Britain in AD 410 until the thirteenth century is equally scant. Nevertheless it is recorded that a ‘portion of a Saxon cross head’ was found in 1907 (Edwards n.d.; SMR PRN 1788). There still remain two ancient cross fragments in the west end of the nave of the church (ibid). It is not known if these are the same as those discovered in 1907, and they are too fragmentary to accurately be dated (ibid), but their presence implies that an early church may well have been established on the site (Finch n.d., 4-5), or at least suggests the possible presence of a Christian burial ground (ibid).

3.2.2 Little is known about the continuity of settlement at Ribchester following the end of Roman control, although it is thought likely that a church of some sort may have existed within the remains of the Roman fort and that one was certainly present at the time of the Domesday survey (Buxton and Howard-Davies 2000, 421). A church is not, however, specifically recorded in the Domesday Book, although its incompleteness in recording Lancashire does not make this surprising (Hodge and Ridge 1997, 5). Ribchester is, however, mentioned in The Status of Blagborneshire, supposedly written in the fourteenth century (Smith and Shortt 1890), which records that the churches of “Blagborne, Chepyn and Ribchester” were built around AD 596 (ibid). The authors, writing towards the end of the nineteenth century, consider this to be
unlikely but it could be a significant hint suggesting that there was an early building on the site.

3.2.4 Another suggestion of an early structure may be inferred from the font of the current church. Describing it as “An octagonal piece of the same width bottom to top. No decoration; only buttresses. Is it C14?”, Pevsner (1991, 208) seemingly questions the fourteenth century date generally attributed to it. Finch (n.d., 14) describes it as “very plain” with “a hint of much older origin, possibly dating from Saxon times or even earlier”. However, his authority or source on the matter is obscure and, as a portable object, it may easily have been brought from elsewhere.

3.2.5 The dedication of the church to St Wilfrid is also possibly significant in suggesting the existence of a building during the Saxon period. Wilfrid was a leading churchman in the mid to late seventh century (Finch n.d., 5), being Bishop of Ripon and Archbishop of York (ibid), and taking a prominent part in the Synod of Whitby in AD 664 (ibid). In addition, he was a keen builder of churches and is known to have founded the Minsters of Hexham, Ripon and York (ibid). He preferred the European style of church with nave and chancel and it is likely that he built churches within his diocese at least as far as Preston (ibid). Indeed, his biographer, Eddius, wrote that he “carried about him a little troop of architects, masons, glaziers and painters” (ibid). Furthermore, during his incumbency as Bishop of Ripon he was granted lands adjoining the Ribble in the Wapentake of Amounderness in which Ribchester was then located (ibid). Finch continues to speculate that “he [Wilfrid] visited this township [Ribchester] and perhaps converted the small square Celtic Church into one of a more durable and magnificent structure” (ibid). Although there is currently no substantiated physical evidence of a building that predates the Norman Conquest, the argument for its potential presence and possible survival is compelling.

3.2.6 Medieval Period: there is no record made of a church at Ribelcastre (Ribchester) in the Domesday Survey of 1086 (Finch n.d., 6; Smith and Shortt 1890; Sidebotham n.d.), but there may be architectural evidence for its existence soon thereafter. In the north wall of the nave is a built-up doorway with a semi-circular arch (Finch n.d., 7) in the Norman style. Although no mention of this detail is made in Pevsner (1991, 208), Finch postulates that this is a relic of a small Norman church which once occupied the site. The conjecture is supported with evidence from a grant of the moiety of Ribchester made by Robert de Lacy before 1193 (ibid; Farrer and Brownbill 1912). This mentions that “the gift of a church in the same town” was expressly reserved to the grantor (ibid). Given that de Lacy was in the possession of the Honour of Clitheroe and, thereby, Ribchester during the reign of Henry I, the grant must have been made between 1100 and 1135. Farrer and Brownbill (1912) state “A church has existed here at least from the end of the 12th century” citing the same source.

3.2.7 Late Medieval and Post-Medieval: during the later part of the medieval period there is little general information about Ribchester, and it would appear that by the end of the sixteenth century it was a relatively poor place (Hodge and Ridge 1997, 8). Most of the inhabitants were involved in the textile industry,
which at the time was small-scale and home-based, and the lack of market and poor position of the town in relation to major roads did not encourage prosperity (ibid). It was not until the eighteenth century, when the handloom weavers began to grow in number and prosperity, that Ribchester’s prosperity began to improve, and many of the houses in the time date from this period (op cit, 9-11). As cotton spinning became dominant and more industrialised, however, the handloom weavers were gradually pushed out and more and more people moved away to the larger cotton mills (op cit, 11). The trend in decreasing population was not halted, even with the building of two textile mills in the town at the end of the nineteenth century (ibid). With this decline in fortunes Ribchester remained in an impoverished state into the twentieth century, and it has only been the advent of tourism that has helped to redress the balance (op cit, 12).

3.3 HISTORY OF ST WILFRID’S CHURCH

3.3.1 Although no unequivocal proof exists of there being a building prior to the current church, there is direct evidence that a church was in existence before 1193, with the documented appointment of a rector and benefice (Finch n.d., 7; Farrer and Brownbill 1912). When first built, the church comprised a “Nave without aisles” (Sidebotham n.d.) and the chancel was added at the time that Ribchester became a separate parish and the parochial system was introduced, probably in the thirteenth century (ibid). The building, therefore, belongs substantially to the thirteenth century and the nave is of Early English style (Pevsner 1991, 208). Early English is the “historical division of English Gothic architecture covering the period c.1190-1250” (ibid), and this correlates well with the documentary evidence attesting to the erection of a building around this time. Much of the church was probably built during the middle of the first half of the thirteenth century (Farrer and Brownbill 1912), leaving the core of the present church, the nave and chancel, as they exist today. The building would essentially have been rectangular and may have terminated to the west with a gable end surmounted by a bell turret (ibid). It is thought to have remained as such until some time in the fourteenth century (ibid).

3.3.2 The west and east windows (Plates 1 and 2) are of the Decorated style (1290-1350) (Pevsner 1991, 208), as is probably the north window (ibid). The east window still contains fragments of late fourteenth or early fifteen century glass (Finch n.d., 14). The south doorway is also Decorated in style (Pevsner 1991, 208).

3.3.3 The porch was added in the fourteenth century (Farrer and Brownbill 1912) and was originally a two-storey structure (Finch n.d., 13; Sidebotham n.d.) with the upper storey serving as “a muniment room or perhaps a school taught by the Chantry Priest” (Finch ibid) or “a library and sewing room” (Sidebotham n.d.).

3.3.4 There are conflicting accounts as to when the two chantrys were built. Both Finch (n.d., 13) and Farrer and Brownbill (1912) state that they were built some time in the fourteenth century, whilst Smith and Shortt (1890) assert that
“in 1405, Sir Richard de Hoghton founded a Chantry dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, on the north side of the choir”. This is what is now known as the Dutton Choir (or Quire) (Plate 7). He further asserts that Hoghton’s daughter, Katherine de Hoghton, was responsible for the building of the southern, Hoghton, chantry, presumably also in the fifteenth century, although Finch (n.d., 13) gives a date of 1349 by which time the Hoghton Choir (Plate 7) was built.

3.3.5 The exact date of the erection of the West Tower (Plate 1) is also uncertain. Finch (n.d., 15) states that it was erected in the fifteenth or early sixteenth century, Farrer and Brownbill (1912) suggest the fifteenth century, Sidebotham (n.d.) gives a thirteenth century date whilst Pevsner (1991, 208) asserts it to be “Perp [perpendicular], but was begun before or in the middle of the C14 [fourteenth century]”. The Perpendicular style in which it is constructed covers the period c1335-50 to 1530 (ibid), so it can be assumed that Sidebotham at least is mistaken, and that the tower was constructed sometime between the fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries, by when the plan had assumed its present shape, minus the vestry (Plate 7).

3.3.6 Post-medieval Period: considerable changes to the fabric of the building took place in the early sixteenth century (Finch n.d., 17; Farrer and Brownbill 1912), altering its appearance, if not its plan, greatly. The original steep roofs of the chancel and nave were removed, the chancel walls raised, and the present, shallower, roof was built (Farrer and Brownbill 1912). The date 1527 is carved into one of the roof beams in testimony to the event (Finch n.d., 15; Sidebotham n.d.). It is not certain whether the aisle walls were simply extended or entirely rebuilt during this period (ibid), but its appearance was further altered by the insertion of new square-headed windows (ibid).

3.3.7 Further alterations were made during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and for the first time there are some documentary records of the events (Finch n.d., 15-17), although they are not at all explicit (ibid). The records show that major repairs were made to the church in 1685-6 and in 1711 (Farrer and Brownbill 1912). These are taken from the Churchwarden’s accounts quoted by T Smith in his History of the Parish of Ribchester wherein, in 1685, is noted “For beautifying the church, £3 10s” (ibid) and again in 1686 “Iª to yª masons for hewn work and for waiting and getting stones, £3 3s. 10d” (ibid). A further mention is made in 1711 “For beautifying the church, £3” (ibid). However, no mention is made of the installation of the two “ugly” (ibid) dormer windows to the south side of the nave roof (Finch n.d., 15-17), and it is not known during which renovation they were installed (ibid). Farrer and Brownbill suggest that they are probably from the earlier works (1912, 37).

3.3.8 There are early references to bells at the church in 1650 (Smith and Shortt 1890) and 1666 (Finch n.d., 20), although there were most probably bells to precede this one. It is likely that at least two were present in the fourteenth century (ibid) as the north chapel still has a bell turret, and the western end of the nave is thought to have had one prior to the west tower being erected (Section 3.3.1). The church clock is also mentioned for the first time in 1650 (ibid) in a minute of April 16th (op cit 21), whereby the churchwardens “were
to find oyle and to look to take care yt be kept in good form and order” (ibid). The pulpit is “ornately Elizabethan in style” (Pevsner 1991, 208) but actually dated 1636. It was almost certainly a gift to the church by the then incumbent Christopher Hindle, as it bears the initials C.H. (Finch n.d., 18). Later that century, in 1682, it is mentioned that George Ogden, Vicar, built the Vicarage House (Rectory) mostly at his own expense (Smith and Shortt 1890).

3.3.9 During the Commonwealth in the mid-seventeenth century, a Parliamentary Edict ordered the destruction of all church organs (Finch n.d., 18). Thus, by the time of the restoration in 1660, there were no organs to provide accompaniment and other instruments had to be utilised (ibid). The instruments and their players (Church Gallery Minstrels as they came to be known) required suitable playing space occasioning many churches to build galleries at their west ends (ibid). Such a “Singing Gallery” (Smith and Shortt 1890) was erected at St Wilfrid’s in 1736 (ibid; Finch n.d., 19; Plate 3) and now, somewhat ironically, it houses the present organ which was installed in 1865 (Sidebotham n.d.). The pillars supporting the gallery are of Roman style in the Tuscan tradition (Pevsner 1991, 208) and are popularly thought to be a true relic of Bremetannacum. However, their antiquity and authenticity is questionable (J2 RIB/STW n.d.).

3.3.10 Other than minor repairs and the installation of the present peel of bells in 1822, the building of the gallery was the last major alteration to the fabric of the church until 1881 when the thirteenth century chancel underwent a restoration. The Tithe Map of 1838 (DRB 1/164 1838a), although not detailed, provides an idea of the plan before their alterations and shows a simple rectangular block with projecting sections to the north and south. The alterations were undertaken by Ecclesiastical Commissioners (Sidebotham n.d.), and included the building of a Vestry to the north side (ibid) leaving the full plan of the church that exists today. Three years later in 1884, the present Rectory was built, paid for mostly by a grant from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of £1500 (ibid). There are no surviving remains of the rectory built by Ogden in the later seventeenth century (Section 3.3.8) despite instructions to the contractors to recover and salvage as much as they could (ibid). The earliest detailed map of the area (Ordnance Survey 1893) shows the church with much the same form as it has today (Plate 6), demonstrating that all of the major periods of construction and enlargement had been completed by that date. No major expansion is shown on later maps (Ordnance Survey 1912; 1932).

3.3.11 Modern: the church was partly destroyed by fire in 1917 requiring further restoration in that year (Sidebotham n.d.). However, major restitution and refurbishment waited until 1924 commencing on 26th May (ibid) during which, amongst other things, the bell-ringing floor was removed from the west tower so that they are now rung from the floor (ibid). The porch was restored with “several interesting stones [being] recovered beneath” (ibid) and “decorated stones” were removed during the excavation of new drainage channels (ibid). In addition, the floors of the nave and chapels were replaced “for the old boards were decayed and laid upon bits of Mediaeval bench ends without any space beneath” (ibid).
3.3.12 No further major works have been undertaken at St Wilfrid’s Church since the completion of the restoration works in 1924. However, there are several interesting citations for improvements from 1924 to 1974 held at Lancashire County Record Office in Preston (LCRO(Preston)). Many minor improvements are made in the period and include the following entries:

- on 9th February 1928, is granted a faculty “for the introduction of communion tables and rails into the north chapel and the chancel, and to complete the panelling in the North Chapel” (PR 3313/4/2 1928)
- on 21st October 1932 “to install electric lighting” (PR 3313/4/3 1932)
- on 4th October to 15th November 1933 “to enclose a Burial Ground by the taking down of the present wall and erecting same in the new position as outlined in red on the plan” (PR 3313/4/4 1933). Regrettably, no accompanying plan was available and it remains unknown as to which wall reference was made.
- On 16th of January 1948 provision was made “to install an electric organ blower” (PR 3313/4/6 1948). It presumably was a manual pump device before this date.

3.3.13 The church is presently protected as a listed building (Grade I).
4. VISUAL INSPECTION RESULTS

4.1.1 St Wilfrid’s Church is constructed from roughly-coursed blocks of yellow-orange sandstone and has a sandstone flag roof. It has a tower at the west end with a doorway and there is an aisle attached to the south side of the nave, with a porch on the west end over the main entrance, and a smaller choir attached to the east end of the north side (Plate 7). A clock-face dated 1813 is attached to the east elevation of the tower.

4.1.2 External detail: the pitch of the roof of the nave has evidently been lowered and additional dormer-style windows have been added; the scar of the earlier, steeper roof is visible in the east elevation of the tower (Plate 2). The roof of the chancel has similarly been altered and there is also a scar visible. The gable of the chancel (east elevation) has an elaborate carved cross finial. There are three tall rounded-headed lancet windows and buttresses at either side, and a short buttress in the centre. There is also a roll-moulded string course below the level of the windows. The south elevation is pierced by various windows including lancets with two-point arches and trefoil designs finished with hood moulds (Plate 2). One of the trefoil windows seems to be extended as it cuts through the string course. There are three square-headed windows in the nave, with arches and panels decorated with trefoils. The porch has small round-headed windows in the east and west elevations and a large four-point arched doorway with a hood mould. The internal doorway is flanked by engaged columns. The southern aisle and the porch both appear to be later additions. The tower at the west end has a crenellated top, buttresses, and windows on the first and second floors with four-point arched tops and hood moulds (Plate 1). A clock-face is attached to the east face of the tower inscribed with the initials ‘RG’, ‘ED’, and ‘HH’, and the date 1813. The north elevation is similar to the south, although there is no additional aisle, only a small attached choir at the east end. There are similar square-headed windows with trefoil decoration in the nave as well as arched windows in the choir.

4.1.3 Internal detail: the nave has a flagged floor and a relatively modern roof constructed in an antiquated style; mainly comprising arched braces fixed to principal rafters with additional angled struts above. In two cases the truss consists solely of a tie-beam, one of which has a king post and angled struts below a collar with further angled struts above. The other tie-beam has a row of upright staves between the tie-beam and collar with empty holes for additional staves.

4.1.4 The north and south elevations of the nave are open to the aisle or choir with large four-point arches on columns allowing access to both. There is a blocked doorway with a segmental arch to the west of the choir in the north elevation. The chancel is also accessed via a large arch at the east end of the nave with engaged columns (Plate 4). There is only a low doorway below the timber gallery, which houses the organ and is supported on two stone columns, allowing access into the bell tower at the west end (Plate 3). The south aisle has a single pitch roof with braced beams, some of which have additional decorative wind braces. The north choir has an elaborate ceiling with suspended ridge purlins below collars with angled braces. There is also a
single tie-beam with a crown post. There is a fragment of early wall painting exposed against one of the windows.

4.1.5 The chancel has evidently been refurbished and repointing can be observed in a number of places. The roof is probably a relatively late construction with arched braces to the collars and angled struts (Plate 5). There is a moulded cornice and rolled string course across the elevations. There are three lancet windows in the east elevation and a doorway to the vestry (which was not accessible) in the north elevation. A small leper hole(?) covered by glass is also cut through the north elevation, which has presumably been recently uncovered. There are windows and a doorway in the south elevation. The larger aperture is partially blocked and below it there are the remains of three niches forming a sedilia (Francis n.d.) and a piscina, with the remains of half of another niche also visible, but partially removed by later apertures. The details of the tower are almost entirely covered by modern fittings and coverings. There is a doorway in the stair tower on the north side. Above the entrance to it (to the east) the gallery is supported by four stone columns.

4.1.6 There are a number of inscriptions and plaques within the church describing recent phases of repair. These include:

‘This church was re-opened after restoration on January 31st 1925. The cost £5300 was met by Parishioners and Friends
S. Sidebotham, Rector’

‘This Chancel restored 1881’

‘This Chancel was again restored after a disastrous fire in 1917’

All of these dedications correspond to events described in more detail in Section 3.2.

4.1.7 **Conclusions:** the visual inspection correlates with many of the broader phases of alteration identified during the desk-based assessment. The relationship between the nave, the southern aisle and northern choir is visible. There are also clear differences within the roof structure of both the nave and the southern aisle suggesting several phases of alteration could be identified through more detailed recording. The major alterations to the roof, which lowered the pitch, are visible externally and the new roof structure was probably altered subsequent to this event. The more subtle alterations are not as obvious, in particular those which might relate to work carried out in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, although more detailed investigation might be able to identify them.
5. SIGNIFICANCE OF REMAINS

5.1 CRITERIA

5.1.1 There are a number of different methodologies used to assess the archaeological significance of sites; in this instance those outlined in Annex 4 of Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (DoE 1990), as used by the Secretary of State when scheduling Ancient Monuments, will be used. The church is considered using each of the following criteria, and the results outlined below.

5.1.2 Period: the church is extremely significant within the period criteria, although it in fact belongs to a number of periods. As a medieval building it is undoubtedly unique in the immediate area, and therefore of great importance. As a building that has been altered during a number of subsequent periods, may have be on the site of a much earlier church and is situated within a Roman fort, it is extremely significant in showing several stages of development and use.

5.1.3 Rarity: St Wilfrid’s is the parish church of Ribchester and so is unique to the area. This status also makes its size, complexity and architectural value more rare in the local area. Regionally, it is likely to be one of only a small number of parish churches of similar age and form, although there are many more of these nationally.

5.1.4 Documentation: only a relatively brief investigation of the documents relevant to the building was carried out during the assessment. There are undoubtedly further, much earlier, documents that could be examined (although these would probably require specialist research). Records relating to archaeological work in the vicinity of the church could also prove to be of some relevance as could other documents about the town in general. A church’s significant place within the local community is likely to have made it a focal point of early documentary sources in the area.

5.1.5 Group Value: the church is intimately connected with the Roman fort and the town as a whole. There are other buildings in Ribchester also connected to it, such as the vicarage and parish hall, but these are arguably of limited historical interest.

5.1.6 Survival/Condition: given the age of parts of the church its survival is very good, perhaps demonstrating its value to the local community. There is, therefore, considerable potential for further information to be gained by examination of the fabric of the building. The condition of the structure, while also very good, is largely a product of frequent repairs and alterations. This may in some cases simply mask the earlier fabric, but it is also likely to have destroyed a great deal of it as well.

5.1.7 Fragility/Vulnerability: the church is unlikely to adversely affected by damaging development and is not in a fragile condition. It is, as the current
programme of repairs suggests, vulnerable to more gradual decay and this makes the need for further recording important but not necessarily essential.

5.1.8 **Diversity:** the church does not display a wide range of features, apart from those relating to the different uses of parts of the building. The church is in itself a relatively complex structure, the parts of which, though related, are used in a number of ways. It is therefore significant, but only as a development that has a single overriding function.

5.1.9 **Potential:** while the history of the church has been discussed by several writers but the fabric of the church has not been examined in detail, and there is a great deal of potential for further information to be gained from it. In particular, evidence for a potentially early medieval church could be contained within the walls in the form of re-used material (particularly cross-fragments) and, similarly, re-used Roman material from the underlying fort or other buildings might also be present. The potential to identify information about the early use of the building is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the church.

5.2 **Significance**

5.2.1 St Wilfrid’s Church is a nationally important building. It is the parish church of Ribchester and therefore of great significance to the immediate area and the people within it. Archaeologically it not only retains medieval fabric from several periods and has substantial later alterations, but there is also evidence for a potential early medieval religious site. Furthermore, it is built on the site of a Roman fort and potentially represents 2000 years worth of continuous use. Its position in the centre of the fort also allows for the possibility of Roman deposits being discovered during any works, which affect below ground remains.
6. IMPACT

6.1 SUMMARY OF AFFECTED ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

6.1.1 Introduction: the project brief (Appendix 1) outlines the main elements of repair work proposed for St Wilfrid’s Church. These are discussed below and in turn their likely level of impact is assessed.

6.1.2 West Tower: the tower is thought to be fourteenth or fifteenth century and houses the present peel of bells which was installed in 1822. It is not thought that the proposed works will have a significant impact on the fabric of the church, although elements of re-used masonry could be revealed; the impact is therefore likely to be negligible.

6.1.3 Roof: it is believed that the present roof is substantially sixteenth century in date with later additions. Re-slating will have a adverse affect on those areas where this is carried out, whereas repairs to existing slates will have little archaeological impact elsewhere.

6.1.4 Masonry: the north wall potentially incorporates a Norman feature, otherwise the walls are considered to be thirteenth century with substantial extensions in the early sixteenth century. The porch is known to be fourteenth century whilst the two chantrys are generally thought to be fifteenth century additions. The proposed minor repairs and repointing of some areas of ancient masonry will not have a significant archaeological impact, although it is possible that elements of re-used fabric could be exposed during this work.

6.1.5 Windows and Doors: the proposed redecoration of metal window sub frames, other minor repairs and the replacement of the boiler room door will not have significant archaeological impact.

6.1.6 Floors: the current floor of the nave and chancel are from the 1924 restoration. Repairs to existing floor will not have significant archaeological impact, although it is thought likely that there may be existing remains of medieval floors beneath.

6.1.7 External Works: the construction of drains around the external walls has the potential to have an adverse impact on buried archaeological remains, with the possibility of previous foundations and inhumations being uncovered.

6.1.8 Internal Works: redecoration and reparation of damaged plasterwork will not have significant archaeological impact, although elements of re-used masonry could be exposed.
7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MITIGATION

7.1 PROPOSED ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

7.1.1 There are a number of areas of research that could be addressed by any level of examination of the building, including gaining evidence for the date of construction, examining in detail its development through the late medieval and post-medieval periods, and finding any pieces of re-used material from either the Roman or early medieval periods. The proposed schedule of works has a particularly high potential for answering any or all of these questions, and the possibility of discovering re-used material, particularly pieces of early medieval cross-shafts for example, would be very valuable.

7.1.2 Although the impact on the historic fabric of the building as a whole is considered likely to be minimal (see Section 6), the potential for fragments, either structural or portable, of some significance to be recovered is relatively high. Such fragments would appear to have been recovered during previous repair and rebuilding and not properly recorded (see Section 3.3.11). The following recommendations are therefore based on this premise.

7.1.2 It is proposed that a watching brief be undertaken during the programme of restoration (Appendix 2). This should be carried out in particular during the excavation of drainage ditches around the external walls and the reduction of the ground surface. This is due to the potential for the existence and disturbance of buried archaeological remains. A watching brief should also be undertaken during any reparations to the current floor to determine the existence or otherwise of medieval remains beneath.

7.1.3 Any areas of wall exposed by the removal of render, mortar or other wall coverings should be similarly examined in order to identify re-used material or the presence of features such as blocked doorways and windows.

7.1.4 It is further proposed that a full photographic survey of the roof be made prior to repair, both interior and exterior, although this would rely on the erection of scaffolding in order to make this possible.
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APPENDIX 1: PROJECT BRIEF
Dear Ms. Plummer,

Re. English Heritage grant aided repairs to four historic churches.

we have been commissioned to oversee four grant aided historic church repair projects. These four projects have two clients, 1 and 2 are the responsibility of St. Wilfrid’s PCC and 3 and 4, the two churches in Cumbria share one Vicar, Father Anthony Dalton at All Saints Vicarage.

1. St. Wilfrid’s C.E. Parish Church, Ribchester for St. Wilfrid’s PCC.

2. St. Saviour’s Stydd, nr Ribchester, also for St. Wilfrid’s PCC. - Knights Templar Chapel with occasional services in summer months only.

3. All Saints C.E. Parish Church, Orton, Cumbria for All Saints PCC.

4. St. Oswald’s C.E. Parish Church, Ravenstonedale, Cumbria, for St. Oswald’s PCC.

We attach a copy of the main elements of work for each project. There is an amendment to the work for St. Wilfrid’s as we are now also re-roofing the tower roof - replacing the lead work and altering the roof access rather than repairs to the existing lead roof.

You may wish to advise us from your experience on the appropriate level of involvement and the fees required. Fees should be separately itemised if there are options to consider.

As a guide we expect that for this stage 1 work to tender stage you will undertake the following work for each church:
1. Allow for an initial site visit if considered necessary to fulfil the requirements in item 2.

2. Desktop exercise to provide a brief report on the important areas and features of the building with the measures, precautions and site working arrangements required to be taken into account by Contractor’s tendering for the work. This should relate specifically to the areas where work is to be carried out. (See the attached Proposed building works sheets “Brief description of elements” for each church.)

This should include your recommendations and guidance to the Contractor on excavations and opening up works. It would be helpful if the guidance included clear instructions to the Contractor on the procedure to follow for exhumations should human remains be found during excavations. (contd.)
All four churches will require your quotations to be separately provided for each church. I trust this information is sufficient. If there are any queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Ivan Wilson.
APPENDIX 2: PROJECT DESIGN
ST WILFREDS’S CE PARISH CHURCH, RIBCHESTER, LANCASHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING INVESTIGATION AND WATCHING BRIEF
PROJECT DESIGN

Proposals
The following project design is offered in response to a request by IWA Architects on behalf of St Wilfred’s PCC for an archaeological building investigation in advance of proposed building works at St Wilfred’s CE Parish Church, Ribchester, Lancashire.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This project design has been compiled for IWA Architects with reference to the requirement for an archaeological building investigation of St Wilfred’s CE Parish Church. Section 2 states the objectives of the project, Section 3 deals with OA North’s methodology. Section 4 addresses other pertinent issues including details of staff to be involved, and project costs are presented in Section 5.

1.2 OA North has considerable experience of the assessment and investigation of historic buildings of all periods, having undertaken a great number of small and large-scale projects during the past 20 years. Watching briefs and building investigations have taken place within the planning process, to fulfil the requirements of clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables. Recent church projects include St Paul’s and St Mary’s in Preston, St Laurence, Chorley, St Helen’s, Waddington and St Conan’s Kirk in Argyll.

1.3 OA North has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. OA North is an Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) registered organisation, registration number 17, and all its members of staff operate subject to the IFA Code of Conduct.

2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 The objectives of the building investigation are to provide an outline analysis of the church prior to and during building works, which will serve to both preserve by record and inform the project engineers.

2.1.1 To achieve the objective outlined above the following listed specific aims are proposed.

Stage 1:
(i) to undertake a desk-based assessment and visual inspection of the church;
(ii) to produce a report and archive in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition, 1991).

Stage 2:
(iii) to undertake an archaeological watching brief;
(iv) to produce a report and archive in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition, 1991).
3 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 Stage 1 - Desk-Based Assessment

3.1.1 The following will be undertaken as appropriate, depending on the availability of source material.

3.1.2 Documentary and Cartographic Material: this work will comprise a rapid desk-based assessment of the existing resource. It will include an appraisal of the data in the CSMR (Preston), appropriate sections of County histories, early maps (printed and manuscript), and such primary documentation (tithe and estate plans etc.) as may be reasonably available. Particular attention will be paid to field and place names recorded on early cartographic sources relating to estate and parish boundaries, field boundaries, woodlands and routes, as these often provide important evidence of archaeological activity and transformation of the historic landscape. All available published and unpublished documentary sources will also be examined and assessed. The Lancashire Record Office (Preston) and relevant local studies library will also be consulted.

3.1.3 Visual Inspection: a brief visual inspection of the church will be undertaken to RCHME level I-type survey. This level of survey is purely descriptive and will result in an outline development and use of the building.

3.1.4 Photographic Archive: a photographic archive will be produced utilising a 35mm camera to produce both black and white contact prints and colour slides. The archive will comprise general shots of the church (both internal and external) and surroundings, and detailed coverage of agricultural features.

3.1 Stage 2 - Watching Brief

3.2.1 Methodology: a programme of field observation will accurately record the location, extent, and character of any surviving architectural/archaeological features exposed during the reduction to external ground levels and the removal of any plaster during the internal works. This work will comprise observation and the systematic examination of features exposed during the course of the works, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features identified during observation.

3.2.2 It is assumed that OA North will have the authority to stop the works for a sufficient time period to enable the recording of important features. It may also be necessary to call in additional archaeological support if a find of particular importance is identified or a high density of archaeology is discovered, but this would only be called into effect in agreement with the Client and the County Archaeology Service and will require a variation to costing. In normal circumstances, field recording will also include a continual process of analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of the data, in
3.2.3 **Burials**: should evidence of burials be identified, the 1857 Burial Act would apply and a Home Office Licence would be sought. This would involve all work ceasing until the proper authorities were happy for burials to be removed.

3.2.4 During this phase of work, recording will comprise a full description and preliminary classification of features or materials revealed, and their accurate location (either on plan and/or section). Features will be planned accurately at appropriate scales and annotated on to a large-scale plan provided by the Client. A photographic record will be undertaken simultaneously.

3.2.5 OA North generally calculates a 1:0.5 ratio of fieldwork: post-fieldwork (archive, analysis, and report preparation) if the level of archaeology observed is low or 1:1 if the level of archaeology is high.

3.3 **STAGES 1 AND 2 - REPORT AND ARCHIVE**

3.3.1 **Report**: one bound and one unbound copy of a written synthetic report will be submitted to the client, and a further two copies submitted to the Lancashire SMR (one paper copy and one digital copy) within eight weeks of completion of fieldwork. The report will include a copy of this project design, and indications of any agreed departure from that design. It will present, summarise, and interpret the results of the programme detailed above and will include a full index of archaeological features identified in the course of the project, together with appropriate illustrations, including detailed plans and sections indicating the locations of archaeological features. The report will also include a complete bibliography of sources from which data has been derived.

3.3.2 This report will identify areas of defined archaeology. An assessment and statement of the actual and potential archaeological significance of the identified archaeology within the broader context of regional and national archaeological priorities will be made. Illustrative material will include a location map, section drawings, and plans. This report will be in the same basic format as this project design.

3.3.3 **Archive**: the results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the IFA in that organisation's code of conduct. OA North conforms to best practice in the preparation of project archives for long-term storage. This archive will be provided in the English Heritage...
Centre for Archaeology format and a synthesis will be submitted to the Lancashire SMR (the index to the archive and a copy of the report). OA North practice is to deposit the original record archive of projects (paper, magnetic and plastic media) with the appropriate County Record Office.

3.3.4 **Confidentiality:** all internal reports to the client are designed as documents for the specific use of the Client, for the particular purpose as defined in the project brief and project design, and should be treated as such. They are not suitable for publication as academic documents or otherwise without amendment or revision.

3.3.5 Monitoring of this project will be undertaken through the auspices of the LCAS Archaeologist, who will be informed of the start and end dates of the work.

4 **TIMETABLE AND RESOURCES**

4.1 The desk-based assessment will take five days to complete; a further one day will be required for the visual inspection.

4.2 The duration of the watching brief will depend upon the progress of the contractor.

4.3 The final report will follow within eight weeks of completion of the data collection and fieldwork, although a shorter deadline can be negotiated.

4.4 The project will be under the direct management of **Alison Plummer BSc (Hons)** (OA North senior project manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed.

4.5 The desk-based assessment is likely to be undertaken by **Daniel Elsworth MA** (OA North supervisor). Daniel has a great deal of experience in the assessment and analysis of historic buildings throughout the NorthWest.

4.6 Present timetabling constraints preclude detailing exactly who will be carrying out each specific task, but all elements of the project are likely to be supervised by an OA North project supervisor experienced in this type of project. All OA North project officers and supervisors are experienced field archaeologists capable of carrying out projects of all sizes.

4.7 OA North has a professional indemnity cover to a value of £2,000,000; proof of which can be supplied as required.
5. **Costing**

The cost is a fixed price cost, inclusive of all management, overheads, and other disbursement costs (travel and expenses), to undertake the programme of work as defined in this project design; the third item is a fixed price day rate. Any other variations from this programme of work at the clients’ direction will require recosting. All staff costs are inclusive of holiday entitlement, as well as NI and Superannuation.

**PLEASE NOTE:**
Normal OA North working hours are between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday, though adjustments hours may be made to maximise daylight working time in winter and to meet travel requirements. It is not normal practice for OA North staff to be asked to work evenings, weekends or bank holidays and should the client require such time to be worked during the course of a project a contract variation to cover additional costs will be necessary.

**Notes:**
1. Salaries and wages inclusive of NI, Superannuation and overheads
2. Total costs exclusive of VAT
3. All costs at 2003/2004 prices